

Art in Contemporary American Society
and World War II Germany

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Purpose of Thesis

This discussion of controversial art is limited primarily to two eras and countries: current debate in the United States concerning NEA funding and World War II German art policies. The paper focuses on the actions undertaken by the National Socialist Regime to suppress and condemn German Expressionistic art, culminating in the 1937 Degenerate Art exhibit. Parallels are drawn between the Nazi repression of art and current deliberations in the United States over the importance of federally funded art.

Introduction-Censorship of Literature, School Texts, and Art

Censorship occurs on a regular basis each day in America and around the world. It is not an act that discriminates against content or historical period. Censorship incidences have been recorded in schools, art institutions, and literary circles. Although extreme and numerous cases of censorship occurred under the rule of National Socialist Germany, they have taken place in other countries and times. Art censorship debate continues in the United States Government, revolving mainly around content restrictions of fine art.

Literature has traditionally received the most censorship publicity. Currently, not only general literature, but also classroom textbooks and museum exhibitions have been thrown into the spotlight of censorship.

A recent example of literary censorship involved Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses. In February 1989, the Ayatollah Khomeini issued an edict against Rushdie. This death threat, with a subsequent bounty offer, created fears worldwide since it applied not only to Rushdie but to anyone associated with his book. As a result of the death threat, two of the three principle United States bookstore chains halted sales of the book. Both the Japanese and Italian translators suffered critical injuries; the former's were fatal. The death threat also caused the lack of a

commercial paperback version until 1992. Until then, publishers had prohibited production due to fears of employee safety.¹

Recent censorship of literature has not been exclusive to The Satanic Verses. A group of senior citizens in Warsaw, Indiana publicly burned forty copies of the text Value Clarifications.² Another example of book burning occurred in Chile in 1986. Approximately fourteen thousand copies of Clandestine in Chile; The Adventures of Miguel Littin, a novel by Gabriel Garcia, were burned. Lee Burrell, an English professor at the University of Wisconsin, claims that this type of protest is not uncommon. He states that twenty to thirty American towns have been the sites of public book burnings in the past few decades.³

Censorship activists have challenged classroom literature often in recent years. For example, Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet has been altered in some situations to meet classroom guidelines, eliminating any hint of sex between the two unmarried lovers along with the removal of some complete sexual passages.⁴ In a second example in Hernando County, Florida, a school board ordered its yearbook staff to change its theme "All in the Cards," believing that it endorsed tarot cards. An elementary school in Northeastern Florida banned the book My Friend Flicka from students' reading lists. Descriptions of a female dog as a bitch implicated this book.⁵

Just as schools have censored books due to sexual content, they have also censored materials that promote secular humanism. For example, an Alabama judge in 1987 recalled approximately 7000 history, social studies, and economic texts. In 1983, a similar case began a journey through the courts. Parents from a Tennessee community protested the teachings of critical thinking, role playing, and religious tolerance through books such as The Wizard of Oz, Goldilocks, Cinderella, and The Diary of Anne Frank.⁶

Literature is not the only genre of expression that has been subject to censorship; the fine arts community has also recently been the arena of much censorship debate. During the summer of 1989, Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) proposed an amendment that would drastically change the system of National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) funding. Under his proposal, the NEA, or any other federally funded agency, could not use the government's money in support of any artistic expression that might be considered obscene.⁷

Another congressman, Senator Alphonse D'Amato (R-NY) also rose on the Senate floor to denounce what he considered obscene art. On May 18, 1989, Senator D'Amato spoke out against Andres Serrano's photograph, Piss Christ.⁸ "This so-called piece of art is a deplorable, despicable display of vulgarity," said D'Amato.⁹ Over twenty senators rushed to join him in his condemnation of Serrano. As a result, Hugh Southern, the acting chairman of the NEA, received a

letter from these senators demanding changes be made in the NEA's grant approval process.

During this climate of heated controversy, Robert Mapplethorpe's exhibition "Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment" was slated to open on July 1 at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The University of Pennsylvania's Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) organized the one hundred-fifty work show and received \$30,000 of NEA moneys for the exhibition. While the show received good responses in Chicago and Philadelphia, the Corcoran Gallery soon canceled the exhibition due to its sexually explicit and homoerotic content. Hugh Southern received a letter from another one hundred congressmen, sent by Dick Armay (R-TX), condemning the show and indicating that the continual support of such art might jeopardize the \$170 million dollar NEA budget.¹⁰ After Washington, Mapplethorpe's exhibition continued to spark controversy. For sponsoring the same exhibit in the spring of 1990, a grand jury indicted the Director of Cincinnati's Contemporary Arts Center on obscenity charges.¹¹

Historically, there have been other periods of artistic censorship and debate. In Germany during World War II, Adolf Hitler persecuted modern artists with an unparalleled zeal. Modern artists suffered humiliation, persecution, and in extreme cases, death. While the current debates and threats that are carried out in our government are a far

from the extremes of the Third Reich, some scholars are beginning to draw comparisons.

John Frohnmayer, previous chairman of the NEA, voiced comparisons between artistic censorship of the Third Reich and that of present political debate during a speech at the conference on free expression at the National Press Club on March 23, 1992. His comments particularly revolved around Stephanie Barron's recent exhibition of the degenerate art that was attacked in Nazi Germany. Frohnmayer drew comparisons of the language Hitler and Joseph Goebbels used to that of present day government leaders. Some of Hitler's quotes, he said, could have been taken directly from the Congressional Record.

In the same speech, Frohnmayer went on to criticize Leonard Garment, former counsel to President Nixon. Comments published by Garment suggested that the NEA support only time tested art in order to avoid controversy.¹² This philosophy of art support is strikingly similar to opinions voiced by Hitler: "But true art is and remains eternal, it does not follow the law of the season's fashions: its effect is that of a revelation arising from the depths of the essential character of a people which successive generations can inherit."¹³

Federal Funding of the Arts

In 1965, an independent federal agency was created to encourage and support the arts in the United States. This agency, the NEA, provided support to both individuals and non-profit agencies through grants and other services. State, regional, and local arts agencies, arts education initiatives, and programs for rural and inner city areas receive support from the NEA.¹⁴

The fact that arts were popular only in certain regional areas, such as Boston, New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles hampered the initial efforts to organize an arts foundation. In contrast, the humanities held nation wide appeal. As a result, the two combined in initial legislation.¹⁵

Scholarly research, education, and public programs dealing in humanities received support from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Grants provided by the NEH are available to individuals, institutions, and organizations.¹⁶ Both endowments, the NEA and NEH, began with federal appropriations of 2.5 million each. Until 1976, the level of funding for both organizations remained equal.¹⁷

Current NEA funding remains jeopardized by the agency's continued support of controversial artists and exhibitions. A 1989 NEA funded photography exhibition by the late Mapplethorpe along with an additional 1989 exhibition by

Serrano added to this heated federal funding debate. As a result of this debate, NEA grant recipients must pass a decency test before being approved.

The controversial work of art that caused much of this congressional turmoil was Serrano's photograph, Piss Christ, a Cibachrome print displaying a wood and plastic crucifix submerged in the artist's urine. The Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA), a center that received NEA funding, organized Serrano's exhibit. A SECCA jury chose Serrano and nine other artists to receive \$15,000 in fellowship money and participate in the show "Awards in the Visual Arts 7."

An uneventful three city tour that closed with little debate in January, 1989 displayed Serrano's now famous photograph. During the spring, members of congress and the NEA received numerous letters of protest from the right wing American Family Association (AFA). The association's executive director, Rev. Donald Wildmon, alerted members of the church of immoral art happenings. In the AFA newsletter, he encouraged members to notify their congressmen of their dismay. They responded with letters attacking specific photos, the exhibition in general, and federal sponsorship of the event.¹⁸ In response to this protest, Frohnmayer stated that, "This is an issue entirely driven by fundamentalist religious groups..."¹⁹

During the congressional debates regarding federal funding of the arts, two senators were especially outspoken.

New York Senator D'Amato was recorded as saying, "This [Piss Christ] is an outrage, and our people's tax dollars should not support this trash, and we should not be giving it the dignity," along with, "If people want to be perverse, in terms of what they recognize as art or culture, so be it, but not with my money, not with the taxpayers' dollars, and certainly not under the mantle of his great nation. This is a disgrace."²⁰ Not to be outdone, North Carolina Senator Helms also vented a few choice words about Mr. Serrano. "I do not know Mr. Andres Serrano, and I hope I never meet him. Because he is not an artist, he is a jerk."²¹

The 1989 amendment to the appropriations bill, (PL 101-512), introduced by Senator Helms and signed into law by President Bush in that same year, required grant recipients to sign a pledge stating they would not use government funds in creating obscene art.²² Artistic excellence with consideration of decency and diverse American values formed the basis that the agency used to award grants. Senator Pat Williams (D-Mont.) partly wrote these new standards. Artists that had been ruled obscene by a court of law were not permitted to receive grants from the NEA. Also grants were required to be repaid to the NEA if conclusions were reached that they had violated the obscenity law.²³

Reaction to this decency clause, while hailed by the extreme right, was denounced by many arts associations. Several organizations, The Paris Review, University of Iowa

Press, and The Gettysburg Review, all refused to receive NEA money rather than sign the mandatory obscenity pledge.²⁴

In 1990, four performance artists sued the NEA in the case of *Finley v. NEA*.²⁵ John Fleck, Tim Miller, Holly Hughes, and Ms. Finley were denied a total of \$23,000 in grant money. Initially, a board of fellow artists recommended the four as recipients of grant money.²⁵ Then due to the sexually explicit content of their work, the NEA revoked their grant money. In March of 1991, the artists' suit expanded to include a constitutional challenge to the decency clause.²⁶

As a result, the judge in *Finley v. NEA*, A. Wallace Tashima, ruled that the obscenity law violated the artists' First Amendment rights due to its vague and broadly worded nature.²⁷ Additional briefs released after the ruling, including one by the American Association of University Professors, agreed with the judge's ruling.²⁸ The four performance artist now may legally petition the NEA for reinstatement of the previously denied grant money.²⁹

On June 21, 1993, the Clinton Administration released statements in an attempt to clarify its views on the decency standard. The administration contended that the provision is within constitutional boundaries.³⁰ This opinion conflicts with statements President Clinton made during his presidential campaign, when he had previously said that "As President, I will defend freedom of speech and artistic

expression by opposing censorship or 'content restrictions' on grants made by the NEA."³¹

While speaking at the National Press Conference on March 23, 1992, John Frohnmayer indicated that perhaps the current political battle concerning NEA funding may escalate into a broader cultural war. He drew upon the Nazis' conquest of Europe to substantiate his claim. "If the National Endowment for the Arts gets picked off, public broadcasting is next, and after that research funds for universities, and after that research funds for science...There will be no end to it. It's the Sudetenland now, Czechoslovakia next week, and after that Poland."³²

German Art Censorship

The parallels that Frohnmayer makes warrant further exploration. Even before Hitler came into power, a long history of German artistic censorship existed.³³ In 1913, the Prussian House of Representatives approved a resolution that made the degeneration of art a condemnation.³⁴ The Duetsche Kunstgesellschaft (German Art Association) and the National Socialist Alfred Rosenberg's Kampfbund fur Deutsche Kultur (Combat League for German Culture), both right wing organizations, denounced Expressionism and Bolshevism in art during the 1920's.³⁵

Although not as widespread and furious as Nazi attacks, German Expressionistic art did suffer from censorship under Germany's Weimar Republic. One Berlin case, in 1928, involved charges of blasphemy against the artist George Grosz. Grosz's drawings in question had been placed in an album titled Hintergrund (Backdrop). A drawing of a crucifixion scene with Christ wearing boots and a gas mask produced the most controversy. Although initially found guilty, Grosz won acquittal upon his appeal.³⁶

In 1929, National Socialist William Frick was elected to the German Reichstag.³⁷ Frick ordered the removal of several artist's work, including Ernst Barlach, Paul Klee, and Lyonel Feininger, from the collection in the Schlossmuseum at Weimar in 1930.³⁸ One appointee of Frick's included Paul Schultze-Naumburg, the author of Art and Race. Schultze-Naumburg organized and placed a traditional arts and crafts school in the building complex that had once housed the Bauhaus. As a result, the destruction of Oskar Schlemmer's wall murals there was ordered immediately.³⁹

Other examples of attacks upon modern art occurred under the Weimar Republic. In 1929, the Reichsverband bildender Kunstler's (Federal Association of Artists) Munich chapter objected to the Berlin Nationalgalerie's buying of several paintings by Vincent Van Gogh. In 1930, the Stadtischemuseum in Zwickau fired its director due to his support of modern art and artists.⁴⁰

Immediately after gaining control of the German government in 1933, the National Socialists began the crusade of systematically attacking modern art.⁴¹ A manifesto titled "What German Artists Expect from the New Government" was published in March 1933. This manifesto stated that any art considered cosmopolitan or Bolshevist would be removed from all German collections and museums. Statements further concluded that the art should then be displayed to the general public, and the public should be informed of the costs of such art. The curators and art officials responsible for their acquisition would be revealed and then all the art destroyed.⁴² Various propaganda shows carried out these goals by traveling around Germany, displaying the "degenerate" art. The titles of a few included "Images of Cultural Bolshevism," "Chambers of Horrors," and "Art in the Service of Subversion" .⁴³

Wanting art to be a vital influence in the construction of his new German nation, Hitler voiced several general goals for his new art program. He stated that art must be made to represent the whole of the population and the collective racial identity.⁴⁴ "Art must speak to the general society, and the society must respond to art. The artist could not be an alienated individual, separated from his people and from their history."⁴⁵

Hitler also thought that good art needed to be easily comprehended by all people.⁴⁶ "I am ... convinced that art, since it forms the most uncorrupted, the most immediate

reflection of the life of the people's soul, exercises unconsciously by far the greatest direct influence upon the masses of the peoples, but always subject to one condition: that it draws a true picture of that life and of the inborn capacities of a people and does not distort them."⁴⁷

Hitler emphasized the eternal qualities of true art, stating that it should be more than a passing movement.⁴⁸ "National-Socialist Germany, however, wants again a 'German Art,' and this art shall and will be of eternal value, as are truly creative values of a people...[f]or art is not founded on time, but only on peoples."⁴⁹ Other qualities that Hitler associated with true art were a national focus, a positive outlook towards society, and the representation of only the good and healthy.⁵⁰

Official state art of the National Socialist Party included Neoromantic and Neoclassical art. This art was considered racially pure, uplifting towards the German race, and easily understood.⁵¹ The Greek idea of physical perfection was presumed to be based on Aryan features. Hitler himself particularly enjoyed this type of art, liking pseudo Greek and Roman kitsch, torches, eagles, and togas.⁵² While discussing art with Otto Strasser on May 21, 1930, Hitler had this to say, "There is only one eternal art - the Greek - Nordic art, and all such terms as 'Dutch Art,' 'Italian Art,' 'German Art' are merely misleading and just as foolish..."⁵³ Adolf Ziegler, a favorite painter of Hitler's, conformed to this Neoclassical ideal in his

depiction of female nudes, as did Josef Thorak and Arno Breker in their paintings of conquering Nordic heroes.⁵⁴

Favorite themes of National Socialist art included the glamorized labors of peasant workers. Women, especially mothers, were glamorized in art since they would bear the future generations of the Aryan race.⁵⁵ Generally, women played passive roles in art, offering themselves up symbolically for the good of men and the good of the nation.⁵⁶ Landscapes of the German countryside also were favorite subjects, as well as nude females displaying their perfect and healthy Aryan bodies. Perhaps the most widely used subjects were those of young soldiers, laborers, and portraits of Hitler.⁵⁷ These powerful and dynamic role models symbolized the heroism which the country could depend upon for stability and honor.⁵⁸ These male stereotypes were almost exclusively shown as young and healthy, while male non German figures were almost always depicted as old and tired.⁵⁹

F.A. Kauffmann, a supporter of National Socialist realism, summarized its aesthetic points in a 1941 essay:

"Since any renewal is essentially concerned with human beings, it is natural that the German figure is a highly favored theme in our modern art. Guided by a true instinct, our artists find their models primarily among those fellow citizens who are, as it were, still sound by nature. They set to work where closeness to the native soil, the restorative powers of the landscape, the protection of the race from impurities... It follows from this that our contemporary painting frequently portrays the faces and figures of men who follow the old callings close to nature: farmers, hunter, fishermen, shepherds, and woodcutters."⁶⁰

Hitler also summed up the role of German art to be "the expression of this determining spirit of the age. Blood and race will once more become the source of artistic intuition..."⁶¹

Modern art was considered amoral partly because of its lack of restrictions in subject matter. In contrast, the Social Realist artist only depicted the good, healthy, and pure. Degenerate art depicted the erotic, illicit, and illegal sides of modern life. National Socialists considered this to be relegating the good to the same level as the bad, thus creating corrupt art.⁶²

Between the years 1937 and 1944, an exhibition titled the "Great German Art Exhibition" occurred annually. The House of German Art held these Nazi approved art shows, with Hitler officiating at the opening ceremonies.⁶³ The House of German Art was the Nazi's first public building construction project. In 1937, for the dedication of the German House of Art, Hitler personally selected the Aryan artists represented in the show. He continually returned to the openings, presiding over the parades and festivities until 1942.⁶⁴ Academic artworks, depicting subjects approved by the state, comprised practically the entire body of the works on display.⁶⁵

The artists that predominated in this academic showing, like Ziegler, Thorak, and Breker, did not suddenly come forward with the onset of National Socialist power. Rather,

they were already producing this art when the Nazis seized German power. By their apparent accordance with the National Socialist Party, they became esteemed as great artists, true to German ideals.⁶⁶

Many German artists did not conform to these Academic standards. The Nazi Regime suppressed their work if it contained threatening content or themes. This was especially true of any artistic threat aimed towards traditional values or institutions. Depicting criminals, prostitutes, or any other of the harsh realities of urban life was viewed as promoting moral and ethical decay. Two artist that were particularly affected by this outlook were Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Grosz.⁶⁷ Often, Grosz's paintings dealt with subjects like beggars, entertainers, nightclubs, prostitutes, prisoners, politicians, and capitalists.⁶⁸

Along with negative subject matter, an expressive style could cause an artwork to be labeled degenerate.⁶⁹ The Nazis read paintings for content instead of responding to any expressionistic style. If these expressionistic qualities did not correspond to an object's natural or idealized appearance, then the work of art became labeled degenerate and condemned.

The Nazis circulated information that claimed that modern artists worked abstractly due to physical abnormalities. Speculation spread that the defective eyesight of modern artists did not allow them to see the world normally.⁷⁰ Supposedly, the genetic flaws from their

inferior ancestors caused these expressionist artists to suffer from their poor eyesight.⁷¹ Hitler labeled their art as "creations of the diseased imagination."⁷² He also supported the ideal that these artists had defective eyesight by saying "that there really are men who on principle feel meadows to be blue, the heaven green, clouds sulphur-yellow..."⁷³

In a speech concerning modern art given on July 18, 1937, Hitler claimed: "Either these so-called artists really see things in the fashion they represent, and in that case we would merely need to discover whether their visual abnormality is the result of mechanical defects or inheritance, or they do not themselves believe in the reality of such impressions...in which case such activity is a matter for the police and the criminal court."⁷⁴ In a statement insinuating euthanasia, Hitler emphasized that the Third Reich should do whatever necessary to prevent the transmission of any additional hereditary defects.⁷⁵

In 1928, the German architect Schultze-Naumburg wrote a book titled Kunst und Rasse (Art and Race). This book concluded that modern artists looked toward physically deformed people as models of perfection. Photos of disfigured or deformed people were published along side reproductions of art by Amedeo Modigliani and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff. In his book, Naumburg argued that these artists promoted deformities as physical ideals.⁷⁶

Naumburg, a successful and popular architect as well as landscape architect, became engrossed with the notion that the genetic makeup of a person affects their art work. He concluded that a racially pure Aryan artist produces art that is also pure, healthy, and good. In contrast, art that seems to defy reality is produced by those people who are not pure and wholesome, directly pairing the decline of culture with the decline of race. Artists that he particularly used to prove his point included Emil Nolde, Barlach, Erich Heckel, Carl Hofer, and Kirchner.⁷⁷

Modern art had sparked controversy in other European countries besides Germany. Regardless of nationality, art and artists have caused public debate and scorn due to new and innovative ideals. In Paris in 1863, Edouard Manet created a furor over his painting Dejeuner sur l'herbe. Also, artists included in the First Impressionist Exhibition were dubbed as mad, insane, and delirious. The initial response to all unprecedented artistic movements has generally been that of hostility and misunderstanding.⁷⁸

The Nazis took advantage of the general population's mistrust and ignorance about these new art forms. Since people were already looking at art with suspicion, the National Socialists had little trouble convincing them of direct ties between artistic and moral decay. Cubism, Futurism, Dada, and all other avant-garde movements were regarded as Bolshevist and corrupt.⁷⁹

Examples of art and artists previously denounced degenerate and corrupt included The Boy Jesus in the Temple, by Max Liebermann. Also, in 1892, an Edvard Munch painting exhibition in Berlin had to be closed two days after it opened due to the public's angry response. In attempting to exhibit drawings by Auguste Rodin, the director of the Weimar museum was forced out of his position in 1906. A similar incident happened in 1909 at the National Gallery in Berlin, when Kaiser Wilhelm II fired the director there due to his support of modern art. The press also condemned these shows of modern art, opposing a 1910 Munich show of Wassily Kandinsky, Alexi von Jawlensky, Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Andre Derain, and Georges Rouault.⁸⁰

To rid Germany of this modern art, Hitler either sold it to other countries or publicly destroyed it. The art works deemed too offensive to be kept in Germany were auctioned off for cash sales to other countries and collectors. Germany even appointed a council to project the values of the degenerate art and oversee the art auctions. The Swiss Galerie Fischer of Lucerne hosted a huge auction on June 30, 1939, during which one hundred and twenty-five degenerate art works were sold.⁸¹

Included in the art works sold in Switzerland, several were by famous artists. A Van Gogh Self Portrait along with his Portrait of Dr. Gachet, which sold recently for \$82.5 million, were auctioned off. Acrobat and Young Harlequin by

Picasso, and Henri Matisse's Bathers with a Turtle sold, as well as various works by Munch and Cezanne.⁸²

The remaining works that did not find buyers were shipped back to Germany, at which time, an enormous bonfire by the Berlin fire brigade destroyed thousands of prints, paintings, and drawings.⁸³ Artists' work destroyed in this fire included that of Nolde, Klee, Kirchner, along with many others.⁸⁴

Anyone affiliated with the creating, selling, or buying of art was required to belong to the *Kunstkammer* (Chamber of Art). This chamber accommodated approximately forty-two thousand members, excluding Jews and communists.⁸⁵ On November 11, 1936, Hitler issued a statement banning art criticism.⁸⁶ He stated that the artist "creates for the people and we will see to it that henceforth the people will be called in to judge its art."⁸⁷

The persecution of modern art reached a climax in Munich in 1937. Goebbels, the German Minister of Propaganda, appointed a six member commission, including Ziegler, to gather all the degenerate art from German museums and public collections. This art would become the substance of a supreme horror show titled "Entartete Kunst" or the Degenerate Art exhibition.⁸⁸ The first exhibition opened on July 19, 1937.⁸⁹

It only took a few weeks for the commission to organize the exhibit. The obviously temporary and roughly constructed exhibition hall emphasized the government's aim

to degenerate the art objects.⁹⁰ Ziegler's committee rushed through a total of twenty-eight cities and thirty-two museums in their hurried quest for degenerate art.⁹¹ The works that eventually were displayed at Entartete Kunst comprised only a fraction of the sixteen thousand objects that this committee confiscated.⁹²

Nazi officials selected the nine rooms of the Archaeological Institute in Munich as the site of Entartete Kunst.⁹³ Six hundred-fifty works of art covered almost every available space in these rooms.⁹⁴ In emphasizing the degeneracy of these artworks, walls were used for quoting Hitler and Goebbels. Labels were attached to artworks citing, in the vastly inflated prices of the 1920's, the amount of government money paid to acquire such art.⁹⁵ On a wall in which a Kandinsky painting hung, someone had crudely painted a version of it as a backdrop.⁹⁶ Paintings were hung without frames, hung upside down and askew, double hung, and hung over doorways.⁹⁷ The Germans went one step further in assuring that the public would react properly to this show. Actors hired by the government feigned outrage and stirred up public indignation.⁹⁸ In his opening speech, Ziegler asked the public not to hide its anger but to cry out against this modern art.

A catalogue of the show was also published and available to the public. The words "Degenerate Art" graced the cover, reproduced over an image of a stone head by Otto Freundlich. Text of statements denouncing modern art,

quotations from Hitler, and reproductions of art filled the catalogue. The catalogue introduction proposed that degenerate art caused the cultural decline of the past and that the Jewish threat to German culture remained very much in evidence.⁹⁹ The catalogue also reproduced artworks along with works done by the mentally ill, drawing similarities between the two "corrupt" and "deviate" groups of people.¹⁰⁰

There were several purposes behind the Third Reich's sponsorship of this art exhibit. They wanted the mostly uneducated German public to view this art in person. They wanted to make sure that the work was seen in their context. They emphasized that the modernist movement was a planned and carefully calculated attack by Jews and Bolsheviks against traditional German culture.¹⁰¹ The show also served as an attack against all modern art supporters as well as artists. Since the artworks were all confiscated from public collections, museum directors, curators, and dealers were either directly or indirectly implicated.¹⁰²

Another explanation has arisen regarding the purpose of Entartete Kunst. If the Nazis had quietly collected and then destroyed the art, they would have been risking the creation of martyrs. By displaying the art to the uninformed general public, they appealed directly to the people. The Nazis sent a broad message worldwide, to all modern artists, that German policy would be to no longer tolerate such art. Entartete Kunst ensured that the German art policy now held popular support.¹⁰³

The public attended the Degenerate Art show in such great numbers that the exhibition remained open until November, two months after the original scheduled closing.¹⁰⁴ On average, twenty thousand people saw this free exhibition each day. On August 2, 1937, an overwhelming number of people, thirty-six thousand, passed through the doors of the Archaeological Institute.¹⁰⁵ This exhibition, having a total of two million visitors in four months, is still the most attended exhibition in history. Five times as many spectators attended it than did the Great German Art exhibit.¹⁰⁶

Deciding which artists to include in Entartete Kunst was not an easy task for German officials. Some German modern artists had strong affiliations with the Nazi party, served heroically for Germany during World War I, or were esteemed as good German citizens. One such artist was Nolde. Nolde's paintings were not labeled degenerate when the Nazi's first came into German power. Initially, the strong and intense colors he used were thought to symbolize the strength of the German race. In 1920, Nolde even became a member of the Nazi party.¹⁰⁷ Though anti-Semitic and a fierce supporter of German politics, he was placed under house arrest by 1941 and prohibited from painting his modernist scenes.¹⁰⁸

A small group of Nazi officials attempted to help Nolde and other German modern artists. They argued that the new, modern art was a precursor to their revolution and spoke

fiercely of its patriotism to Germany. Their pleas went unanswered, and the artists that they fought for - Otto Mueller, Schmidt-Rottluff, Max Pechstein, Franz Marc, Klee, Feininger, and Mies van der Rohe - became labeled as enemies of the state. Though Nolde was an open supporter of National Socialist policy, one thousand-fifty-two of his works were confiscated. In contrast, Max Beckmann and Grosz, who were openly critical to the regime, had only five hundred-nine and two hundred-eighty-five works confiscated.¹⁰⁹

Goebbels enjoyed some expressionist painters, particularly Barlach and Nolde. In the course of remodeling his home, Goebbels asked architect Albert Speer to install some of Nolde's watercolor paintings. When hearing of Hitler's displeasure, Goebbels ordered them to be immediately removed.¹¹⁰

Some artists suffered the paradox of being both degenerate and acceptable at the same time. Both the Great German Art Exhibition and the Degenerate Art exhibit accidentally exhibited the work of Rudolf Belling. Two other artists, Gerhard Marcks and Georg Kolbe, had early work removed from public collections, while their current projects remained in favor with the government.¹¹¹ Marc, a German artist who received the Iron Cross award and died fighting for his country at Verdun, had one of his five paintings removed from Degenerate Art after protests from the German Officers Federation.¹¹²

The Degenerate Art exhibition and the general cultural decline that began during the Weimar rule is in part explained by historian Peter Gay. He claims that a tremendous fear of modernity resulted in cultural regression. The impartial city, the dehumanizing machine, rationalism against God, and the harsh results of World War I created a climate of distrust and hate in Germany.¹¹³

Modern art, particularly New Objectivity and Dada, intended, unlike Classicism, to provoke the viewer rather than comfort and soothe. The Nazi's responded to this artistic aggression in the form of propaganda and destruction. The Nazi's succeeded in this response due to the fact that the general public did not aesthetically understand and were therefore distrustful and hostile towards modern art.¹¹⁴ By acting on these realizations, Hitler used modern art as Germany's scapegoat for past political and economical hardships.¹¹⁵

Current Art Controversies

Both leaders of National Socialist Party and present day American government argued that modern art partially caused the erosion of traditional values. The extreme right wing United States politicians not only attempt to discredit the modern art movement but personally attack individual

artists and specific members of the modern arts community. According to Mary-Margaret Goggin, these unprofessional and personal attacks serve to threaten the persecution of individuals as well as groups.¹¹⁶

Controversy is a quality that seems inherent in the arts. Arts that lack this controversial characteristic may lose some potency and at times could be reduced to the mundane.¹¹⁷ Noteworthy artists sometimes admit to purposefully disturbing and shocking the public with their work. If these affronts to traditional standards and morals cannot be funded by the NEA, then it will eventually sponsor little more than wary academicism.¹¹⁸ Robert Rauschenberg described the job of being an artist as "to keep the individual mind open, discouraging a mass agreement or an enforced point of view."¹¹⁹

Politicians and government spokesmen recognize the power held within controversial art. Their desire to contain and control art quantifies the effects art still has on a large number of people.¹²⁰ The government's present need to state concise arts regulations also indicates the degree of alarm it perceives from the arts.¹²¹ Indeed, controversy is not always beneficial. To those programs and institutions not strongly or securely funded, controversy can precede disaster.¹²²

The photographic work of the late Robert Mapplethorpe caused much recent debate over censorship and federal funding of the arts. The Mapplethorpe retrospective "Robert

Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment" created an enormous uproar when the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C. canceled the exhibit due to its controversial sexual content. The Corcoran Gallery attempted to deter attention away from the artist and the exhibit by canceling the show but instead propelled the issue into the arena of public debate.¹²³

An additional attempt to censor and close this exhibition occurred in early March 1990 in Cincinnati, Ohio. The Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) filed suit, asking a judge to decide upon obscenity issues before opening day. The CAC and its director, Dennis Barrie, were indicted on misdemeanor obscenity charges. On the exhibit's opening day, the police video taped the show for evidence and were then prohibited from tampering with the public's access, pending trial. One result of this public debate included record opening day crowds for the CAC. The grand jury eventually found seven of the one hundred seventy-five photographs in violation of obscenity codes. Five of the seven have been named the "X-Portfolio." The remaining two photographs are of nude and semi nude children.¹²⁴

Legal Cases

The Roth case of 1957, in an upholding of the 1873 Comstock Law, remains the legal precedent in obscenity cases. Similar findings were produced from the American Law

Institute (ALI), an institute that employs lawyers, judges, and scholars to extrapolate the law into clear and precise language. They produced a 'Moral Penal Code.' This code basically classifies a thing as obscene if it goes past accepted limits of discretion in representations of items appealing to purient interests.

In a 1973 case (Miller v. California) the Supreme Court intensified its stance on obscenity by upholding the idea that materials must meet three tests in order to be deemed obscene. The materials must appeal exclusively to purient interests. The material has to be in conflict with the established norms of the community. Finally, the material must be without any type of aesthetic, scientific, or otherwise valuable quality.¹²⁵

One primary free speech issue was undermined by a 1991 legal case. This free speech issue is known by the "content-neutrality" or "viewpoint-neutrality" rule. Basically, this principle states that materials may not be censored solely because they opposed the ideals of the majority of the community. A 1991 decision, Rust v. Sullivan, greatly detracted from the "content-neutrality" principle.

A decision in Rust v. Sullivan upheld the use of the gag rule by the Department of Health and Human Services. This rule applied to family planning clinics that received federal funding. By receiving federal funds, doctors, nurses, and any other employed health official could not

discuss abortion alternatives to clients. The courts declared that by receiving federal funds, an institution may be restricted by the government. Waiving of Constitutional rights, including free speech, is a permissible result of this ruling.¹²⁶ While only in his third day in office, President Clinton lifted the restrictions imposed on health officials in the Rust case, but the law remains in the books and thus remains a threat to future free speech issues.¹²⁷

The implications of the Rust ruling reaches across many subject areas and could affect countless institutions. To claim that an agency is only free from current government viewpoints by receiving no federal money, leaves few organizations for independent funding. The amount of institutions that do not rely on any government assistance is minimal at best, so the ramifications of this ruling may prove to be quite profound and vast. Due to Rust, the government can deny funding for any reason, including political, thematic, content, and viewpoint controversies.¹²⁸

Right wing politicians and special interest groups have claimed that they are not promoting censorship per se in their desire to control the recipients of federal funds. They assert that the artist is free to create any type of art, just not always with the aid of federal funds.¹²⁹ "Ultimately, the NEA, NEH, and IMS [Institute of Museum Services] should be abolished," said Senators Armey and Randy "Duke" Cunningham (R-CA), "But if that is impossible,

then this committee should adopt a mechanism whereby we at least insure that we 'do no harm' either to the artist or the taxpayer."¹³⁰

The argument that withdrawing federal funds does not constitute censorship is a weak one due to the fact that the NEA plays such a important role in public arts sponsorship.¹³¹ Also, government funding promotes a more diverse arts program than does corporate or private sponsorship, where sponsors may only wish to support their particular point of view.¹³²

The Importance of Federal Funding

As well as providing support to individual artists, the NEA funds programming at art institutions, schools, and community group projects. Art funding has, in recent years, been more evenly distributed to rural and smaller populated areas as well as to well known centers and artists.¹³³

The establishment of government funding of art through the NEA effects the role of the American arts community greatly. Only thirty-seven dance companies existed before the creation of the NEA. Now, they number approximately three hundred. Today, the public can choose between one hundred ten opera companies, but before the NEA, America only sponsored twenty-seven. The NEA currently funds over one thousand orchestras across the United States, as opposed

to the fifty-eight in existence before 1965, and the current number of professional theaters, four hundred twenty, looms highly above the total of twenty-two that operated before government funding became available.¹³⁴

Conclusion - Arts Education is the Key

Artistic freedom faces the dilemma of sustaining a positive relationship with society to guarantee the freedom of expression. Yet, by exercising this freedom, artists risk offending an alienating the very public it seeks for support. John Dewey recognized this paradox and advocated aesthetic education as one possible solution.

It is in part the art world's responsibility to build an active arts education program, ensuring the ability for future generations to exercise artistic freedom. Aesthetic education is the fundamental concept in fostering a responsible attitude and healthy environment for the arts.¹³⁵

Notes

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2. Charles S. Clark, "School Censorship," Congressional Quarterly Researcher, 3, Number 7 (1993): 158.
3. Clark, 147.
4. Clark, 160.
5. Clark, 162.
6. Clark, 160.
7. Louis Lankford, "Artistic Freedom: An Art World Paradox," Journal of Aesthetic Education, 24, Number 3 (1990): 13.
8. Carole S. Vance, "The War on Culture," Art in America, 77, Number 9 (1989): 39.
9. Congressional Record, 101st Cong., 1st sess., 1989, 135, pt. 64: S 5594.
10. Vance, 39.
11. Lankford, 15.
12. Kim Masters, "Frohnmyer Decries Cultural War," Washington Post, 24 March 1992.
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15. O. B. Hardison Jr., "NEH at Twenty: Has It Made a Difference," Change, 18, Number 1 (1986): 12.
16. House, 5.
17. Hardison, 15.
18. Vance, 39.
19. Masters, Washington Post.
20. Cong. Rec., S 5595.
In 1995, The government projects the amount of taxpayers' money to be spent on the NEA to be approximately 175 million.
21. Cong. Rec., S 5595.
22. Lankford, 16.
To be considered obscene, an object must meet three qualifications. The major theme must appeal solely to purient ideals, conflict with community norms, and lack any productive aesthetic or objective qualities.

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31. Clifford Terry, "Here Comes a Baby Boomer," Chicago Tribune, 29 November 1992.
32. Masters, Washington Post.
33. Emily Braun, "Return of the Repressed," Art in America, 79, Number 10 (1991): 118.
34. Robert Darnton, "The Fall of the House of Art," The New Republic, 204, Number 18 (1991): 30.
35. Braun, 118.
36. Mary Margaret Goggin, "Decent vs. Degenerate Art," Art Journal, 50, Number 4 (1991): 84.
37. Braun, 118,
38. Goggin, 84.
39. Braun, 118.
The Bauhaus was a German architectural and applied arts school that became the center for modern design during the 1920's.
40. Goggin, 84.
41. Braun, 118.
42. Kenneth Baker, "A Nightmare of an Exhibition that Really Happened," Smithsonian, 22, Volume 4 (1991): 92.
43. Paul Richard, "Hitler's Demon Avant Garde," Washington Post, 16 October 1991.
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45. Henry Grosshans, Hitler and the Artists (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983), 28.
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49. Herschel B. Chipp, Theories of Modern Art (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 476.
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51. Stephanie Barron, "Degenerate Art" The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991), 25.
52. Richard, Washington Post.
53. Hitler, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, 567.
54. Robert Darnton, "The Fall of the House of Art," The New Republic, 204, Number 18 (1991): 31.
55. Goggin, 85.
56. Barron, 28.
57. Goggin, 85.
58. Barron, 27.
59. Barron, 29.
60. Baker, 92.
61. Adolf Hitler, My New Order Trans. Raoul de Roussy de Sales (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941), 153.
62. Goggin, 86.
63. Braun, 119.
64. Darnton, 29.
65. Richard, Washington Post.
66. Goggin, 84.
67. Goggin, 89.
68. Jane Schisgall, "The Arts in Two Societies: Some Implications for Student Education," Social Education, 47, Number 6 (1983): 408.
69. Goggin, 89.
70. Darnton, 30.
71. Goggin, 89.

72. Hitler, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, 570.

73. Hitler, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, 590.

74. Hitler, My New Order, 422.

75. Darnton, 30.

76. Baker, 93.

77. Grosshans, 9.

78. Grosshans, 7.

As early as World War I, German museums sought out modern art. The first museum to buy a painting by Paul Cezanne was the Nationalgalerie in Berlin. Another German museum, the Museum Folkwang in Essen, recognized greatness in the art of Paul Gauguin and Van Gogh at early stages of their notoriety. Entire modern art movements also became associated with Germany. Examples include the founding of the fervently nationalistic Die Brücke Expressionists in Dresden in 1905, in 1911 the creation of Munich's international Blue Rider Expressionists, the 1916 original Dada proclamation, Weimar's Bauhaus founded in 1919, and Mannheim's exhibition of New Objectivity in 1925.

79. Baker, 86-7.

80. Grosshans, 7-8.

81. Grosshans, 113.

82. Richard, Washington Post.

83. Grosshans, 113.

84. Richard, Washington Post.

85. Goggin, 84.

86. Darnton, 28.

87. Hitler, The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, 591.

88. Darnton, 28.

89. Braun, 117.

Entartung, or degeneration, was a biological term that meant deviation or alteration from normal growth.

90. Braun, 118.

91. Darnton, 28.

92. Braun, 117.

93. Darnton, 28.

94. Richard, Washington Post.

95. Darnton, 28.
96. Baker, 86.
97. Braun, 120.
98. Baker, 88.
99. Grosshans, 105-7.
100. Barron, 12.
101. Goggin, 88-9.
102. Barron, 20.
103. Baker, 95.
104. Darnton, 28.
105. Barron, 9.
106. Braun, 119.
107. Darnton, 32.
108. John Loughery, "The Fate of the Avant-Garde," The Hudson Review, 24, Number 4 (1992): 625.
109. Darnton, 32.
110. Goggin, 88.
111. Baker, 90.
112. Braun, 118.
113. Baker, 94.
114. Darnton, 30.
115. Braun, 118.
116. Goggin, 90.
117. Margaret Jane Wyszomirski, Congress and the Arts, (New York: American Council for the Arts, 1988), 4.
118. Jed Perl, "Seeing Mapplethorpe," Partisan Review, 56, Number 4 (1989): 653.
119. "What is Pornography," ARTnews, 88, Number 8 (1989): 139.
120. Loughery, 623.

121. Darnton, 32.
122. Wyszomirski, 4.
123. Perl, 646-7.
124. Lankford, 17-8.
125. Lankford, 20.
126. Strossen, 12-3.
127. Trescott, Washington Post.
128. Strossen, 12-3.
129. Vance, 41.
130. House, Arts, Humanities, and Museums Amendments of 1993.
131. Vance, 43.
132. Lankford, 16.
133. Vance, 43.
134. House, Arts, Humanities, and Museums Amendments of 1993.
135. Lankford, 24.

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